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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington, D.C.) At a press conference today, Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez called upon President Bush to live up to his promise of supporting comprehensive immigration reform by ending the Administration's newly escalated ICE raids.

Almost two years to-the-day before the Administration sent 900 ICE agents to storm the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa, President Bush appeared before the American people and declared:

"We're a nation of laws, and we must enforce our laws. We're also a nation of immigrants, and we must uphold that tradition, which has strengthened our country in so many ways. These are not contradictory goals. America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time... An immigration reform bill needs to be comprehensive, because all elements of this problem must be addressed together, or none of them will be solved at all."

"The raids in Postville have plainly shown that the Administration is acting neither 'lawfully' nor 'welcomingly,'" said Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez, Chair of the CHC Immigration Task Force. "We are not 'lawful' when we interrupt investigations spearheaded by our own Department of Labor. We are not lawful when we implement fear-tactics and deportation-only policies, or railroad men and women through the judicial process, without adequate representation or a full understanding of their rights."

"And we are most certainly not 'welcoming' when hardworking mothers and fathers are not allowed to raise their US Citizen children in the country of their birth, or when those who work the longest hours at the most undesirable jobs are treated like terrorists, simply for waking up and going to work."

"These measures have nothing to do with the comprehensive reform President Bush promised. So today, I am demanding that he remember his promise and his commitment to justice by placing a moratorium on raids."

The press conference follows on the heels of a weekend visit to Postville, where Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chairman Joe Baca (D-CA), Rep. Gutierrez (D-IL) and Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) met with workers from the plant, former detainees released with electronic homing devices and the U.S. citizen children of those detained in the raid.

Members heard stories such as that of a 16-year-old, working 17-hour shifts, six days a week, without overtime on the kill floor of a meat packing plant; a floor supervisor who blindfolded an immigrant worker with duct tape, then hit him with a meat hook; and women in the slaughterhouse whose male supervisors demanded sex in return for decent hours, decent pay, and decent treatment on the job. They endured this victimization only to be herded like animals when ICE swept the plant and left their assailants with no punishment.

"We can all agree that we need comprehensive immigration reform that is tough on enforcement. But any system which fails to respect the enormous contributions immigrants make to our workforce, that fails to reflect our proud history of welcoming people who seek a better life AND that fails to protect our homeland, fails the American people. The Postville raids failed our nation on all three of those levels, and so too will any future raid fail our nation. I believe we can do better."

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